



St. Mary's Church

Stewardship of the Body

“I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made” (Ps. 139)

### Skin Protection

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Although we have not been blessed as yet with many hot, sunny days, damage to the skin from the sun's rays can occur even on cool and somewhat cloudy days. Ultraviolet (UV) rays reach you on cloudy and hazy days, as well as bright and sunny days. UV rays also reflect off any surface like water, cement, sand, and snow. Also, UV rays from artificial sources of light, like tanning beds, cause skin cancer and should be avoided. As of April 2008, at least 28 states had passed legislation governing the use of tanning facilities by minors.

It's skin cancer that is a concern with increased exposure to the sun, especially sunburn. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays appears to be the most important environmental factor involved with developing skin cancer. The two most common types of skin cancer—basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas—are highly curable. However, melanoma, the third most common skin cancer, is more dangerous, especially among young people. Approximately 65%–90% of melanomas are caused by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light or sunlight

To help prevent skin cancer while still having fun outdoors, regularly use sun protective practices such as:

- **Seek shade**, especially during midday hours (10 a.m.–4 p.m.), when UV rays are strongest and do the most damage.
- **Cover up** with clothing to protect exposed skin. A long-sleeved shirt and long pants with a tight weave are best.
- **Get a hat** with a wide brim to shade the face, head, ears, and neck.
- **Grab shades** that wrap around and block as close to 100% of both UVA and UVB rays as possible to protect your eyes.
- **Rub on sunscreen** with sun protective factor (SPF) 15 or higher, and both UVA and UVB protection.



- Sunscreens are available in the forms of topical lotion, cream, ointment, gel, or spray; a salve or stick that can be applied to the lips, nose, and eyelids; a moisturizer in towelettes that can be rubbed against the skin.
- The SPF (sun protection factor) rating is a number such as 15, 30, or 50 that indicates how long a topical sunscreen remains effective on the skin.
- It's a good general rule to apply a sunscreen very liberally. About 1 ounce is recommended to cover the entire body. Skimping reduces protection.
- The sunscreen should be applied about a half hour before going outside to allow time for it to soak in and take effect.
- Sunscreen should be reapplied at least every two hours when staying outdoors for a prolonged period and after swimming, bathing, perspiring heavily, or drying off with a towel or handkerchief. Water- and perspiration-resistant sunscreens are available. However, even their protection will not last indefinitely.